



7th January 2010

Think Two Steps Ahead!"- Choosing Your Career Path

Selecting the next step after secondary school can prove a tall order for both Leaving Certificate students and their parents. Ciara O’Kelly gets some tips on choosing the career path that’s right for you.

It’s a crossroads we’ve all stood at, what road to take after the Leaving Certificate? With so many different course curriculums and educational institutions available, selecting a course of study can be a confusing prospect. And on occasion, because choices are made in haste, the rushed decision may not represent a student’s desired Career of Choice.

Carol Hunt, a professional Careers Advisor with Paramount Career and Outplacement specialises in assisting students and graduates in their career choices. She gives some helpful advice on how to make a decision that you hopefully won’t regret in the future. “First and foremost, you don’t need to panic. You have plenty of time after you submit your CAO to change your mind. However, use this time wisely to process the information you have received about courses and colleges to ensure that your decision meets your career expectations.”

“Also consider the future economy, professions that are being promoted and sectors that are benefitting from investment. Many new courses are now being offered for the first time in Green Energy and Sustainability and students should take the time to review these, if it’s an area of interest to them.”

Thinking Ahead

“Everyone realises that it can be difficult for most students to envisage themselves in a career or profession, but giving *some* thought to what you might like to do ‘career-wise’ may provide the direction that is required to narrow down your college options. In essence, students should think two steps ahead and consider the following approach:

Step 1: Narrow Down Your Occupational Choices

“So what profession might you find interesting? Consider jobs that your family or friends hold. Ask them about it and find out if the job in its practised form is what you expect?”

Carol also says to think about the different skills and competencies that are required. “Acknowledging your own strengths and weaknesses is an important step in considering which career path is best for you.

A work environment that allows your skills to shine will go a long way in terms of job satisfaction. In most cases, employers require prospective employees to have a basic skillset, such as communication, organisation and prioritisation skills as well as some practical experience, for example interacting with customers.”

“You may have already gained these skills through part-time/summer work, without even realising it. These are transferable to almost every profession e.g. Medical, Engineering, Legal, Marketing, etc. So students you might be further along your career path than you think!”

“There are also some very helpful websites that provide “A Day in the Life of...” information, for example, FAS’s Career Directions website has practical information about careers in your industry of choice. Speaking directly to a Careers Advisor can provide valuable insight into careers which you are unfamiliar with. Also the changing job market and ‘new’ emerging professions will be considered.”

Step 2: Select a Path (Education or Work Experience) to support this Occupational Choice

“Narrowing down your areas of interest means you will have a more informed outlook when reviewing particular course curriculums and their delivery style. For example, you may be interested in a course which offers work experience. This will provide you with the opportunity to develop some basic skills that are generic to most occupations. On the other hand, you may select a different course based on the content, if you feel it will suit you better.”

“Students struggling to identify occupational areas of interest may prefer more in-depth and individual advice. Some may benefit from completing psychometric testing which specifically focus on career and occupational areas. By using this “Think Two Steps Ahead” concept – they will be introduced to some occupations and vocations which may suit their innate skills, general interests and preferences.”

Taking a ‘*Whole Person*’ approach, combining testing, considering personality, previous experience, individual expectations and influences, and through structured one-to-one Interview, Students and Graduates can make informed decisions about their future.

Paramount Career and Outplacement Solutions offers informative careers advice to students, graduates and professionals. Further information and individual appointments may be arranged by contacting [Carol Hunt 01-2911960/ 087-0518026](tel:01-2911960) or by email carol@paramounthr.ie.